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ABSTRACT

A study compared the narrative structures in stories told by monolingual Swedish-speaking children (n=19) and Finnish-speaking immersion students of Swedish (n=19), all in fifth grade. The immersion students had been taught in immersion since kindergarten. Subjects each told a story based on a wordless picture book, which was then analyzed for a number of narrative elements. Results indicate that the immersion students included almost as many plot components and subcomponents within an episode as did the control students. In foreshadowing, the immersion students used adequate linguistic expressions to indicate an initiative aspect of the story, as did the control students. Similarly, in wrapping up, the immersion students managed to indicate anaphoric reference as adequately as the control group. Analysis of verb phrase and spatial relations depiction showed immersion students influenced by their first language with regard to grammatical constructions. (MSE)

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NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE STORIES OF IMMERSION PUPILS IN THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE

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NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE STORIES OF IMMERSION PUPILS IN THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE

1. Introduction

The narrative ability of children has been studied extensively during the past few years especially in connection with child language research. Researchers have among other things studied how the ability to construct connected narratives varies among preschool children and school children of different ages. Also within second language research the story-telling ability of second language learners has been studied. In addition there are crosslinguistic research projects studying how children with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds construct stories. Some universals in the narrative structures have been distinguished, but also features that have to do with culture-specific and language-typological differences (see Berman & Slobin 1994).

In my paper I will report on some results from my ongoing research on how children who have attended immersion school for some years cope with telling a story in their second language.

2. Aim

My general aim is to study the development of the second language of immersion pupils and to compare their second-language (Swedish) development with L1 pupils with Swedish as their first language. The more specific aim is to study how the immersion pupils construct a story and what linguistic means they use in making the discourse a connected one. An underlying assumption is that the immersion pupils have already acquired the cognitive ability that is a prerequisite for managing to construct stories, and that there are no differences between them and the L1 pupils in this respect. Differences in the narrative structures of immersion pupils and monolingual pupils should therefore primarily have to do with differences in the linguistic development.

3. Material

The research material that this paper is based on consists of stories in Swedish told by immersion pupils and monolingual Swedish-speaking pupils. Both these groups of children attend schools in Vasa, the immersion children an immersion class in a Finnish school and the Swedish-speaking children a Swedish school.

The two groups of children have the following distribution:

- 19 immersion pupils in grade 5 in the comprehensive school (pupils about 11 years of age), 9 girls and 10 boys (= immersion group, SB1),
- 19 monolingual Swedish pupils in grade 5 (pupils about 11 years of age), 12 girls and 7 boys (= control group, SSV1).

The immersion pupils were the pioneers in the immersion programme in Vasa (and, indeed, in Finland as a whole). Before entering the comprehensive school the children had been one year in an immersion kindergarten with 100 per cent of the instruction in Swedish. In the comprehensive school the pupils have followed the programme of early total immersion. In grade 1 the instruction was in Swedish with the exception of a couple of hours a week of instruction in Finnish when this language was taught as a subject. In grade 5 the distribution of the two languages was about fifty-fifty. The controls have got instruction in Swedish, with instruction in Finnish as a second language from grade 3, two or three hours per week.

This investigation material is part of a larger collection of material belonging to my research project.

The stories have been recorded on the basis of the so-called Frog-Story test, in which the children are asked to tell a story about the events in a picture-book without any text (Mayer 1969, *Frog, Where Are You ?*). The story is conveyed through 24 pictures and is about a little boy, his dog and a frog the boy has caught and put in a jar in his room. While the boy and the dog are asleep, the frog escapes from the jar. The longest part of the story represents the boy's and the dog's search for their missing frog and the adventures they have on the way. In the end they find a frog, and the last picture shows the boy and his dog returning home, the boy smiling with a frog in his hands.

The Frog-Story test has been used internationally in different languages, for different age groups varying from children of 3 years of age to adults, and in both first and second language research. The same testing procedure that is mentioned in Berman & Slobin (1994) has been used. The pupils were first asked to look through the picture-book carefully to see what it was all about. Then the tester asked each pupil to tell a story based on the pictures in the book in front of him from beginning to end. It was thus made clear to the children that they had to tell a connected story. The narrative was recorded on audio-tape and later transcribed.

4. Analysis

The analysis is in progress at present, and therefore I only present some results concerning plot and episode structure and some data illustrating the lexical and grammatical development of the immersion pupils.

4.1 Plot structure

The ability to structure connected narratives demands both linguistic and cognitive skills of the narrator. The narrator must have both the linguistic means necessary to comply with this task in a satisfying manner and knowledge and a sense of what the listener expects, how the information will best reach the listener, which details are relevant to the story, and so on.

Different attempts to formulate general rules of the narrative structure have been made. One of the best known and a basis for later research on narratives appears in Labov (1972, 363). Labov mentions six basic elements in a story:

1. ABSTRACT
2. ORIENTATION
3. COMPLICATING ACTION
4. EVALUATION
5. RESULT OR RESOLUTION
6. CODA

The elements of ORIENTATION, COMPLICATING ACTION and RESULT OR RESOLUTION are obligatory and constitute the plot, while the other elements are optional. Rumelhart (1975) provides an explicit model for the basic structure of a story in the form of a story-grammar. Characteristic of the model is that the story has a hierarchic structure and consists of recursive elements. According to the model the plot is made up of a number of episodes. These, again, can contain components involving orientation, goal, complication and result or resolution. Of these components, complication is obligatory, while orientation, goal and result or resolution are facultative (Lindberg, Juvonen & Viberg, 1990).

The Frog Story pictures can also, as has been done in the crosslinguistic research project of Berman & Slobin (1994) be arranged to form a rudimentary plot by using similar categories as in story-grammar analyses. In this rudimentary plot three main parts can be distinguished: an orientation or a setting, recursive plot-developing episodes, and a result or resolution. In a slightly modified version of the analysis methods established in

Berman & Slobin's project Ragnarsdóttir (1992) distinguishes the following 7 main plot components in the Frog Story:

1. The frog leaves the jar.
2. The boy (and the dog) discover that the frog has gone.
3. Initial search inside the house.
4. The search continues outside (at least one attempt).
5. The search continues throughout the story.
6. The boy finds or takes a frog.
7. The finding of the frog in the end is explicitly linked to the loss in the beginning.

Component No. 1 is the orientation or setting, components 2-6 are plot-advancing episodes, and component No. 7 is the result or resolution. The narrators were given 0 - 7 points depending on how many of these components they referred to explicitly. In her investigation of relatively small groups of native-language narrators (10 per age group) Ragnarsdóttir found that 3-year-old children referred to a mean number of 2.1 plot components, 5-year-olds to 3.4 components, 9-year-olds to 6.7 components and adult narrators to 7.0 components.

In my analysis of how well the plot has been constructed by the two groups of pupils I have used the same key component categories as Ragnarsdóttir. Table 1 shows the explicit references to the 7 key components. It is evident from the table that the immersion pupils manage to include almost all the components in their stories. They are, however, not quite as skilful as the control group in doing this.

Table 1. Number of plot components explicitly referred to by narrators in the immersion group (SB1) and in the control group (SSV1).

Number of components	SB1 N=19)	SSV1 (N=19)
3	1	0
4	0	0
5	5	2
6	8	5
7	5	12
Mean number of components	5,8	6,5

4.2 Episode structure

The episodes can, in their turn, be differentiated into subcomponents, which may be more or less overt. In order to connect the episodes to each other it is not always

sufficient to simply describe the picture, but the narrator has to infer implicit relations or facts. Berman & Slobin (1994, 51-57) tested the ability of narrators to infer relations and facts not overtly represented in the picture in some depicted scenes, where the researchers considered that such inferences were essential for the context. Such a scene is picture 3. This picture shows the boy lying on his bed with the dog on top of him, looking at the empty jar. In the research by Berman & Slobin adult narrators in connection with this picture referred to a maximum of 5 subcomponents in their stories:

Background elements	(1) the preceding change in the state of things (the boy has woken up) (2) temporal location (in the morning, the next morning)
Plot-advancing elements	(3) inferring that the protagonist learns something (the boy sees, discovers, realizes) (4) the state of affairs which is depicted (the jar is empty) or inferred (the frog has been lost, disappeared, run away)
Attendant reaction	(5) the protagonist's response - either subsequent action (gets out of bed to look for the frog) or affective reaction (feeling surprised, concerned, curious).

In Berman & Slobin's investigation native speakers of various languages, 9-year-olds as well as adults, most often referred to four or five subcomponents including inferences about the boy's inner reactions to the loss of the frog, such as surprise, amazement, curiosity or concern. Berman & Slobin (1994, 53) consider that these results indicate that the choice of components is governed by the general development of perceptual and cognitive abilities, rather than dictated by language-specific forms of expression.

Using the categorization into the 5 subcomponents mentioned above I have analysed how specifically the groups in my material narrate on the basis of picture 3. The narrators have been given 0 - 5 points for each subcomponent they explicitly referred to. Utterances of a similar kind as the following have thus scored 4 and 5 points respectively:

- (1) *o på morronen ser dom att den är borta och dom letar dom där o ropar* (SB1-14)
'and in the morning they see that it is away and they look for them there and shout' (4 p.)
- (2) *när pojken vaknade nästa morgon märkte han att grodan hade smitit / han klädde fort på sig för att söka efter grodan* (SSV1-9)
'when the boy woke up next morning he noticed that the frog had sneaked / he dressed quickly in order to go and look for the frog' (5 p.).

The number of components included by the narrators is presented in Table 2. It shows that most of the narrators in both the immersion group and the control group have referred to 4 of the subcomponents. The mean number of explicit references to the subcomponents is, however, somewhat lower in the immersion group than in the control group. With regard to subcomponent No. 5, the immersion pupils refer to the motoric reaction of the boy, but 3 pupils in the control group also refer to some affective reaction (sorrow, surprise, fear) of the boy and the dog.

Table 2. The number of subcomponents explicitly referred to in connection with picture 3 by narrators in the immersion group and the control group.

Number of components	SB1 (N=19)	SSV1 (N=19)
2	1	0
3	6	2
4	11	10
5	1	7
Mean number of components	3,6	4,3

4.3 Lexical elaboration

Foreshadowing and wrapping up

In Berman & Slobin's research project Bamberg & Marchman (1994, 555-590) have analyzed the episodic roles of the Frog-Story pictures and the linguistic expressions the narrators use for these roles. In the analysis they use the notions of foreshadowing and wrapping up. By foreshadowing (ibid., p. 556) is meant the aspect of the narrative activity that prepares the hearer for what is coming next. By wrapping up (ibid., p. 556) is meant the backward orientation the narrator provides, highlighting what has been presented previously. Each episode in the story can be studied with regard to these notions, but especially picture 4 och pictures 22/23 are well suited as starting-points to this purpose. Picture 4 shows how the boy and the dog begin the adventures by going out searching for the frog, and the narrator can here explicitly prepare the listener for the following events. Pictures 22/23 show how the boy and the dog find a frog. The reference to the frog which was lost at the beginning of the story can also here be explicitly referred to by the narrator.

I have compared the two groups of pupils with respect to picture 4 concerning the linguistic means they use in order to express that the search is initiated and is going to

continue. Solely the use of a verb *söka (efter)* 'search for', *leta (efter)* 'look for' in the present or past tense is not sufficient in Swedish to express this aspect. The following examples I have thus not considered indicating the initiation of the event clearly enough:

- (3) *pojken och hunden letar grodan och hunden sätter hans huvud i burken* (SB1-12) 'the boy and the dog look for the frog and the dog puts his head in the jar', and
- (4) *och de letade efter grodan i stövlarna* (SSV1-14) 'and they looked for the frog in the boots'.

But about half of the pupils in both groups (10 out of 19 immersion pupils and 9 out of 19 controls) use adequate explicit expressions to indicate an initiating, continuing activity. Most frequent in both groups of pupils is the use of the verb *börja* 'start' for the notion of this initiating aspect, for instance

- (5) *dom började leta dom lete och let men de hittade inte* (SB1-2) 'they started to look for (them) they looked and looked but they did not find'
- (6) *sen börja dom sök* (SSV1-2) 'then they started to search'.

Other adequate expressions to indicate an initiating event which continues is the co-ordination of the verb *gå* 'go' with another verb, and final constructions, adverbials of time, or adverbials of place indicating repetition. Some examples of these cases:

- (7) *pojken bestämde att den där hunden som den ägde dom skulle gå och söka efter den där grodan* (SB1-4) 'the boy decided that the dog that he owned they should go and search for that frog'
- (8) *dom gick leta den* (SB1-8) 'they went to look for it'
- (9) *han klädde fort på sig för att söka efter grodan* (SSV1-9) 'he dressed quickly in order to search for the frog'
- (10) *så först sökte han överallt därinne* (SSV1-17) 'so first he searched everywhere inside'
- (11) *dom söker allastans* (SB1-17) 'they search everywhere'

The immersion pupils can thus be said to have reached a stage in their second language development when they can express foreshadowing by similar linguistic devices as the controls.

In connection with pictures 22/23 I have analyzed how the finding of the frog is linguistically linked to the loss of the frog in the beginning. In Swedish the use of the

definite form *grodan* 'the frog', the possessive pronouns *hans, hennes, min, sin* *groda* 'his, her, my frog', the demonstrative pronouns *den där grodan, den groda(n)* 'that frog' involves anaphoric reference to the frog mentioned in the beginning, while the indefinite forms *groda, en groda, (två/ett par) grodor, grodor* 'frog', 'a frog', '(two/a couple of) frogs', 'frogs' lack explicit anaphoric reference. In the analysis I found that 14 pupils in the immersion group and 15 pupils in the control group use either a definite form or a possessive or demonstrative pronoun to indicate anaphoric reference. A control analysis of the contexts in the stories of SB1 shows that the pupils earlier in their stories most frequently use the indefinite form (*en*) *groda* '(a) frog' to introduce a new referent in the story. This shows that they know the grammatical rules of the Swedish language in this respect. It can be added that in the immersion pupils' first language, Finnish, there are other means of indicating the definiteness of a noun phrase. The immersion pupils thus manage to indicate anaphoric reference, a linguistic device of wrapping up, in a similar way as the controls.

Verb phrases and spatial relations

Using Frog-Story material Strömquist et al. (1995) have studied first language acquisition in the Nordic countries. They found that Finnish-speaking narrators prefer clearly different constructions in the linking of the verb phrase to spatial adverbials than Swedish-speaking narrators. These differences are due to the grammatical properties of the two languages. The analysis in Strömquist et al. deals with pictures 17/18, which show how the boy falls from a cliff into a pond or a small lake. Table 3 shows the grammatical constructions used by native Finnish and native Swedish speakers when describing the event.

Table 3. Grammatical constructions used by Swedish and Finnish subjects in description of a motion event.

Language	Sentences describing the boy's fall from the cliff constructed with				
	V only	V+prt/adv	V+prt/adv+ (prep)+NP(case)	V+ (prep) + NP(case) sentences	N
Swedish	4 %	41 %	53 %	0 %	49
Finnish	9 %	20 %	23 %	41 %	75

From Strömquist et al. (1995, 18) Table 11.

Table 3 shows that the use of a verb + noun phrase + case (preposition) is the most frequent grammatical construction for native Finnish speakers. None of the native Swedish speakers in the study of Strömquist et al. used a corresponding construction in